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ABSTRACT

This booklet shares ideas, guidelines, and suggestions to help parents of junior high school students help their children read more and derive more pleasure from reading. The booklet focuses on the "why's" and "how to's" of two central issues in promoting reading for pleasure: supplying a wide variety of interesting reading materials, and making time to read. Following an introduction and a section on how to use the booklet, the booklet is composed of five sections: (1) "Why Reading for Pleasure Is Important"; (2) "General Guidelines for Parents"; (3) "Finding Time"; (4) "Gathering a Variety of Interesting Materials"; and (5) "Encouraging Reading for Pleasure: It's Worth the Effort." Lists of sources for parent's reading and of resources for parents from the International Reading Association conclude the booklet. (SR)

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Encouraging Your Junior High Student to Read

John Shefelbine

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Encouraging Your Junior High Student to Read

I begin with a true confession. When I was a kid, I didn't read much. I preferred building forts and climbing trees. My brother Hank, on the other hand, read all the time. So why, you might ask, am I writing about reading when I did so little of it. Well, I still remember my rather-not-read experiences. That makes me an authority, I guess.

As the title says, I'd like to talk with you about encouraging our junior high students to read. (I say "our" because my youngest child is in junior high.) If your family is at all like ours, you might be thinking, "Please! Our life is too complicated already. We have a hard enough time fitting in homework, music, sports, and pet care with our busy work and school schedules. And then there's laundry." That's how I feel, especially when I am stuck in traffic while carpooling kids to a lesson we're already late for.

Still, for reasons that I shall give later, reading for pleasure can be an important part of junior high students' lives. And rather than being yet another duty or burden, pleasure reading actually can add some joy and peace to our

children's world (as well as to our own). If this sounds a bit corny and too good to be true, read on.

Books and Time

I remember the first time we worried that our kids weren't reading enough. It was shortly after one of the hamsters had babies. We didn't know she was pregnant; in fact, we didn't even know "it" was a she. At that point, we wished we had done some reading about hamsters. According to their second and third grade teachers, our daughters Sarah and Anna read quite well. We certainly knew they liked being read to, an activity we had somehow managed to fit into our busy lives from the time they were babies. Still, my wife, Janet, and I wanted them to read more on their own.

We decided on a two-part plan. First, we changed our library routine. We continued going every week or two, but instead of our usual 2 to 10 books, we now carted off 40 to 50. In fact, we brought along grocery sacks. (Wagons were not allowed.) Why so many? At the ages of 8 and 7, Sarah and Anna liked to read shorter books, many of which had been read to them over the years. Usually, they'd go through at least 2 books before we even got home from the library. We also wanted to be sure that they had plenty to choose from, in case 1 or 2 were not that interesting.

Second, we changed their bedtime from 8:30 to 7:30. "By the way," we added, "you can keep your lights on until 8:30 if you want to read." Ordinarily, such a big change in rules might lead to a revolt, but the girls readily accepted this new routine. It helped that they were still young and that our 13-inch black-and-white TV was less than a major attraction. Most of all, it helped that reading the books from the grocery bags was fun. The glorious result was that they started to read a lot more. (I admit that we now had a new worry, but it was a minor one: how to find all those books at the end of every two weeks.)

This all happened 10 years ago. Sarah is in college, and Anna is in high school. Encouraging reading for pleasure seems more complicated now, especially for Rachel,

who is in junior high. We've had to go beyond our initial grocery-sack/lights-on approach, but the same two concerns have continued to be of central importance in promoting reading for pleasure: (1) **supply a wide variety of interesting books and materials** and (2) **make time to read.**

How to Use This Booklet

In this booklet, I share some ideas about books and time and about other related topics. Mostly, these ideas are guidelines to help parents of junior high school students help their children read more and derive more pleasure from reading. (By the way, this information also is applicable to children in elementary school.)

Not every suggestion applies to every family or to every junior high youngster. So, the most important guideline of all is this: We need to know our junior high children—their interests, their outside activities, and their personalities.

Important changes have taken place since they were little kids. Someone new and different is now living in each of our homes. If we take the time to become reacquainted with our children, the ideas in this booklet will have a special meaning for each of us in our unique situations. Good reading will follow naturally.

Why Reading for Pleasure Is Important

Parents often hear that students need to read outside of school. But you may not be sure exactly why this kind of reading is so necessary. You also may not know how important a role you play in encouraging your junior high student's reading.

How do people become good readers? The traditional beliefs are that students learn to read in school, where they master reading skills taught by teachers. Some parents feel that, excluding homework, their youngsters do whatever reading is necessary during school hours. In fact, these views do not accurately represent how students learn to read well.

Practice Makes Perfect

Junior high students who are good readers read a great deal outside of school. They read well not just because they have been taught well and have completed their assignments but also because they read often, on their own, and for pleasure. Lessons with a teacher are not enough when learning to play the piano; hours of practice on the family piano at home are required. A physical education class at school will not produce a first-string basketball player. Afternoons and evenings under the backyard hoop also are needed. The same is true for reading.

Let's face it: There are enormous differences in how much students read. According to one estimate, some read over 10 million words a year while others read as few as 100,000 words. That means that some students "practice" reading over a hundred times more than others, year after year. No wonder some are better readers. Many parents think that good readers are good because they are born smart. I'm saying they are good in part because they read a lot. We parents can intervene and directly contribute to our children's success in school by encouraging reading, reading, and more reading.

Reading for pleasure can help students succeed in school.

Wide Reading Contributes to Success in School

Let me be more specific about the ways in which reading for pleasure can improve reading ability and academic success:

- Students learn to recognize more words "at sight." This increases their reading rate, fluency, and comprehension.
- Students improve their vocabulary knowledge by figuring out the meanings of unknown words they come across in books. This is a major source of vocabulary growth, particularly for students who read widely over many years. Vocabulary knowledge contributes to reading comprehension and is an important part of achievement tests, college entrance tests such as the SAT, and IQ tests.
- Students increase their knowledge of academic language—a form of language used in school books that

differs from the language of everyday conversation. For example, the sentences in books tend to be longer and more complex. Familiarity with this "book language" improves comprehension, learning from textbooks, and school writing.

- Students learn about the world through their book "experiences." Their minds travel to other realms of knowledge; their imaginations make the new information their own. This book knowledge of the world dramatically improves reading comprehension and academic ability.

Personal Growth and Enjoyment

The benefits of reading are not merely academic. The benefits listed below are equally significant:

- Junior high is a difficult time of personal, physical, and social growth. Students struggle with being popular—something that can be as burdensome when they are popular as when they aren't. In junior high, friendships often are no more dependable or longlasting than preteen dress fads. Reading, especially reading stories about other kids facing similar problems, can help students feel less isolated and less insecure. Reading can give them ideas and strategies for making this period of their lives more enjoyable and productive. Reading and discussing books about adolescence may help our children reveal concerns and feelings similar to the ones experienced by the characters in the stories. Some junior high students in Texas wrote:

  Having not too many friends, books gave me ideas [that] friends would....

  A book is a friend in paper.

  I read so much because I didn't know anyone.

- Reading for pleasure can and should be a major leisure-time activity. Encouraging reading during junior high can help establish rewarding habits and interests that

will continue through high school and adulthood.

I really love to read. It's kind of a stress release for me.

Reading Outside School Is Necessary

Wide reading is not just nice, good, worthwhile, or advisable. For many reasons, this kind of reading is just plain necessary. So, for me as a parent, promoting reading is an important responsibility. I feel that parents need to take this issue seriously. Getting our junior high students to read more takes time and effort. We may have to change some of our own routines. Simply expecting, or asking for, more reading usually is not enough. We need to develop a workable plan and consistently follow it over a long period of time, all of which brings us to the real purpose of this booklet: What can you and I do besides just telling our children, "Go read a book!"

General Guidelines for Parents

This booklet is about encouraging our children to read. According to my dictionary, *encourage* means 1. to inspire with courage or confidence; 2. to stimulate by assistance or approval. Confidence, approval, and assistance are key words in persuading students to read more.

Being Confident

As parents, we need to be confident both about the necessity of reading outside school and about our ability to change how much our children read. Junior high students are particularly good at reading how parents really feel about an issue. If we are unsure about the necessity of reading, or if we doubt that reading habits and interests can be strengthened, our youngsters will sense our own lack of certainty and commitment, and they will behave accordingly. Some may even test us in ways known only too well

by you and me. Our own resolve to be consistent and to go out of our way for the sake of reading is much more convincing than anything we say. So we need to follow through on our part of the plan, even when we'd much rather "let it slide this time."

Showing Approval

Junior high kids still value our approval as parents. Demonstrating approval, then, is another part of encouraging young readers. However, applying this principle is not as simple as it sounds because some kinds of approval are better than others. When we show approval of reading, we need to indicate clearly that we are pleased with how enjoyable and meaningful the reading is for our children. Consider the following ways:

- *Listening* to our children share reading-related interests and excitement is an indirect form of approval that is particularly powerful. At its best, this is a spontaneous activity during which we ask and listen out of interest. I'd avoid making it a book-report-like requirement designed to monitor reading progress. Our purpose is to read for pleasure, not to turn home into a second classroom.

- *Discussing* with our children what they have read is another good way to show approval. It helps if we have read the book ourselves. I know of one parent who checks out two copies of each book, one for her daughter and one for herself. This "coreading" approach works best with books that parents find interesting and enjoyable, and it strengthens parent-child communication and understanding.

- *Noticing and commenting on* our children's enjoyment is a simple but powerful way to emphasize the value of pleasure reading. Just say, "I'm so glad that you seem to be enjoying that book!"

Note that the above suggestions stress the value of reading to please the reader. We need to avoid a do-it-for-me attitude.

Consider the following guidelines:

- It's better not to offer external rewards (money, gifts) if internal rewards (reading pleasure) are sufficient.
- Don't offer fancy, expensive rewards if more simple ones are just as effective. (I know of several families who regularly excuse their children from washing dishes if they are "buried in a book.")
- Avoid the negative approach. Emphasize what will happen when reading does occur rather than what will happen when it doesn't.

If time is the main problem and if you think paying your child to read is necessary, you might point out that you are buying *time* for pleasure reading. It's best to stress reading for learning and enjoyment rather than reading for earning.

Giving Positive Assistance

Junior high students primarily need help finding time and finding interesting materials to read.

Our assistance needs to be positive. Consider this negative approach: "OK, since you refuse to read for pleasure on your own, we are going to tie your leg to the bed and weigh down your chest with heavy books, You can get up only if you promise to enjoy your reading more." This example is a joke, of course, but it illustrates the absurdity of forcing children to read for pleasure. Sure, they might read some, but it will not be with much, if any, enjoyment. Don't use reading as a punishment. Who wants to do something associated with pain, punishment, or displeasure? In the words of three students:

> *I don't like to read. I don't like books. [I read this summer] because I had to. Or else I would have been grounded.*
>
> *I enjoy reading books for fun, but I hate being made to read books.*
>
> *I don't like being pressured to read.*

One of the best ways to help a junior high student read is to develop and follow a pleasure reading plan. Treat reading as something that parents and children need to think about and work on cooperatively. Attitudes will be more positive if we show that we are flexible and if we give our children a choice about when to read and what to read:

- *Explain* that we are talking about the fun kind of reading and why more reading can be done as a source of pleasure and learning.
- *Listen* carefully to our children's views.
- *Look at any roadblocks.* Lack of time, lack of books and materials, little previous experience at reading for pleasure, and difficulty with reading are possible obstacles.
- *Develop a game plan* using good sense and any relevant suggestions. Again, it's best to follow a cooperative approach. Finding time for reading can require a lot of negotiation.
- *Establish new routines.* We must be sure to follow through on our part of the plan. Our willingness to change our own routines (e.g., not watching a TV program that we like) and our consistency are critical parts of helping our children follow new routines.
- *Is it working?* From time to time, sit down and talk about how things are going. Make changes when necessary.

Finding Time

Lack of time is probably the single most common reason junior high students give for not reading more. According to one seventh grader:

> *I don't really get a lot of free time this year because I have sports early in the morning which means I have to go to bed early and all my other time is homework and eating.*

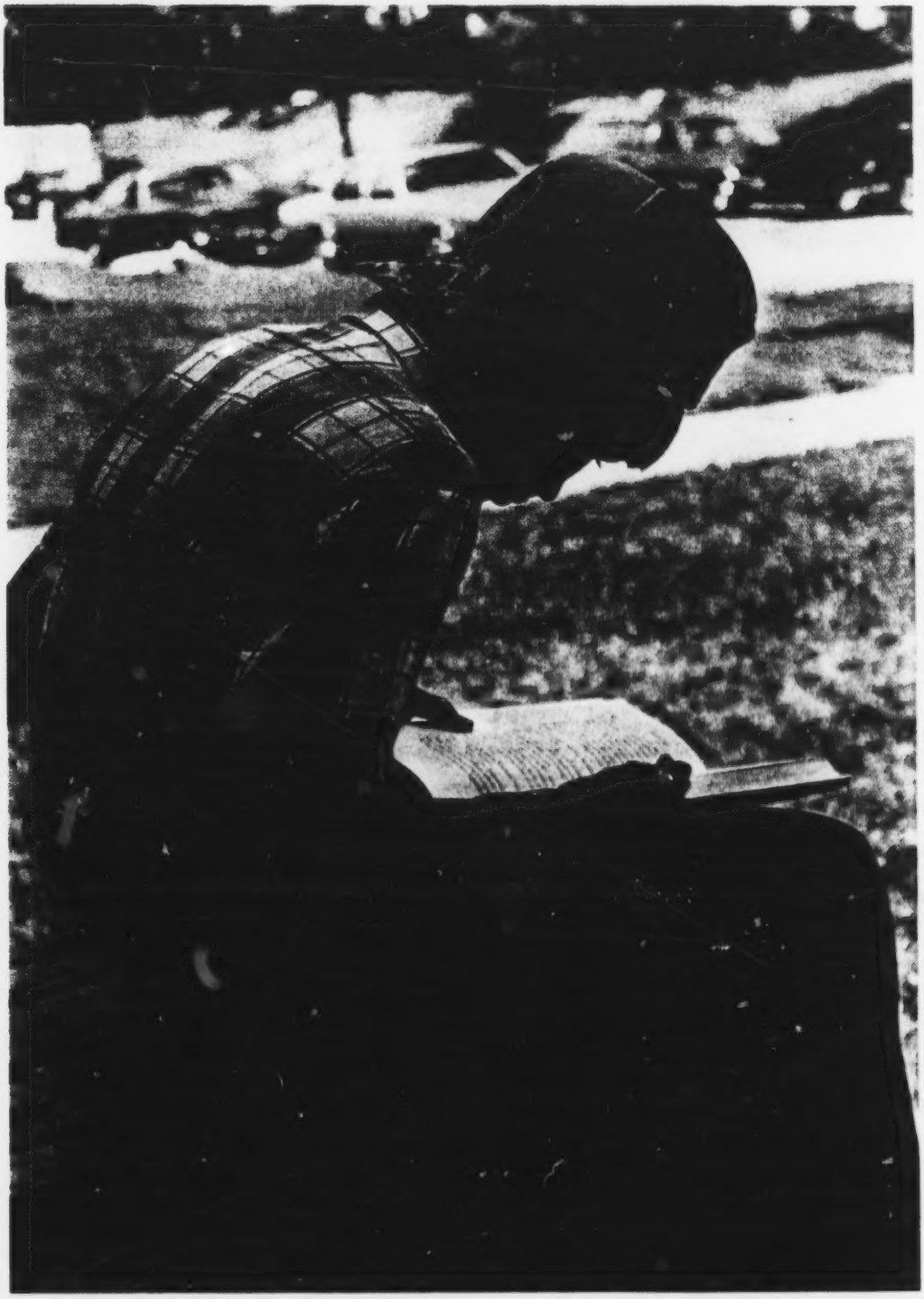
A good way to determine how students spend their time is to sit down with them and write out what happens in a typical week. (Better yet, have them keep a log.) Then go back and analyze which activities are necessary or obligatory and which are optional or recreational. Distinguishing between these two makes it easier for youngsters to know how to find time for reading.

Obligated Time

Obligated time can be a problem, especially during the school year. Like adults, some students have surprisingly full schedules, what with long school days, sports, outside lessons, homework, after-school chores or jobs, and, finally, sleeping. How can outside reading be increased if there is little or no time left after doing everything that has to be done?

- *Off-season reading.* Don't make your children feel guilty about not reading, particularly if they do read when they have a chance. For example, one group of eighth graders reported that they were too busy during much of the school year but they made up for lost time during the off-season. Such periods include the breaks between football, basketball, and baseball seasons as well as summer and midyear vacations. Trips are ideal times for reading.

  In the summer I went on a long car trip and had nothing else to do.



A busy youngster can fit in reading between other activities.

- *Fit it in here and there.* Encourage your junior high student to find reading time, however short, around other activities, e.g., riding in the car, waiting to be picked up, fifteen minutes before bedtime.
- *Overscheduled?* You might consider whether your youngster is overscheduled. Together, perhaps you can decide to shorten or drop some of the activities that are not absolutely necessary. This maneuver has the effect of making time for pleasure reading more important than time for certain other activities.

Recreational or Free Time

Some students who claim they have no time to read do, in fact, have quite a bit of free time; they just prefer to spend it in other ways—playing outside, watching TV, listening to music, or just hanging out. If free time is available, be grateful; now all you have to do is to encourage them to use some of their free time for reading. This is not always easy because students tend to view their recreational activities as obligated time; any changes you suggest may be seen as unfair, even punitive. We need to follow a cooperative approach in which we nudge (not force) our children into reading for pleasure.

The willingness of junior high students to read during their free time depends on their attitudes toward reading; thus their levels of interest can vary dramatically. Many seem to enjoy reading only when there is nothing better to do. In their own words:

> *[I read] because at night I don't have anything else to do.*
>
> *I read 15 books during the summer because my mother often went to the library and got books for me to read when I was bored, which I was often.*
>
> *[I read because] I was bored and I had nothing better to do. My friends were out of town. It wasn't hunting season.*
>
> *I read as much as I could because of the length of time I had to go cooped up in a car.*

While we may feel disappointed that our children list reading toward the bottom of fun things to do, we should be glad that they at least enjoy reading.

Some Guidelines for Finding Time

Here is a list of openers that might pay off for reading:

- *Let's talk about quiet times.* Given that many junior high students say they read on their own "if there is nothing else to do," our task involves finding periods of time that are relatively boring. And what could be more boring than "quiet time"? So, after discussing the importance of reading for pleasure outside of school, explain that the two of you need to find quiet times during which to read for pleasure. Be prepared for reactions such as "But this reminds me too much of nap time!" Emphasizing the need for quiet time, rather than stressing reading, allows your child to choose to read and reduces the sense of being forced to read.

- *How do you feel about reading?* Working together, figure out how your child feels about pleasure reading. Make it clear that you are talking about more than just books. Some junior high students do not think that magazines and comics count as reading. (More is said about this in the next section.)

- *What's not so important?* Looking at the list of how time is spent in a typical week, discuss the attractiveness of each free-time activity. Ordering these from most to least important might be helpful. Some students will claim that everything they do in their free time is equally necessary, but after some thought will admit that perhaps TV reruns aren't so spellbinding.

- *Let's make a deal.* In general, try to take time from activities that your child considers to be on the same level of interest as reading. The less students like reading, the less willing they will be to give up any portion of their favorite pastimes.

- *You're not giving it all up.* Initially, you and your junior high student might just reduce, rather than eliminate, certain free-time activities. For reluctant readers, reductions at first should be modest; as they become more interested in reading, other reductions can be made.
- *At least once a day.* Daily reading tends to be better than weekly reading, even if there is only time to read one chapter. Students tend to forget what happened if they open a book only once or twice a week.
- *Start with short periods of reading.* If your youngster is not used to reading for pleasure, begin with relatively short periods of reading; for example, 15 to 30 minutes.
- *Too tired to read?* Beware of leaving all reading until just before bedtime, especially if bedtime is rather late. Tired kids simply will fall asleep while reading.
- *We'll back you up.* Finally, honor and guard your youngster's reading time. Do not allow interruptions on your part or anyone else's. If a job or chore hasn't been done, wait until after reading time before you mention it. Intercept telephone calls and tell friends knocking at the door to come back later.

Television: The Bad and the Ugly

TV deserves special mention because for many junior high students it takes up so much free time. In the words of some students:

> *[I did not read more last year] because back then I was a TV addict.*
>
> *I don't enjoy reading when I can watch TV.*
>
> *Reading takes time and I like to watch TV more.*

According to one study, students average over 2 hours a day watching TV and less than 5 minutes reading for pleasure. Some watch up to 6 hours of television each day.

Changing these patterns can be difficult, particularly when a family as a whole watches a lot of TV. Over the years, TV may have been used as a babysitter.

Most students are not going to feel good about substituting reading for TV. This will be especially so if your child is supposed to read while others are watching a favorite show.

Here are some ways to tackle the TV problem:

- *Get rid of the set.* Some families have resorted to this seemingly drastic solution. They report that family members started reading more, and many began pursuing other interests for which they thought they had no time. You might try this for a month or two on a trial basis by moving the TV to the attic or garage.
- *Turn the TV off for everyone.* The entire family's viewing patterns have to change. Turning off the TV requires conviction, support, and discipline on the part of everybody, particularly parents.
- *Don't subscribe to cable.* The more programs there are to choose from, the more children will want to watch. So, you might want to go back to the standard three or four channels and PBS.
- *Limit TV watching.* Limit your child to an agreed on number of hours of recreational TV. A no-TV-during-the-late-afternoon-and-early-evening-hours-on-weekdays rule can result in much more time for homework and reading. Some authorities recommend no more than 10 hours per week (and not more than 1 hour per weeknight). Help your youngster decide which programs will be watched. Note that programs missed in the fall can be seen when reruns begin in the spring. If you own a VCR, you can use it to spread out a cluster of popular shows that air on the same night.
- *Move the TV set.* This strategy involves making TV-watching less convenient and less comfortable. Rooms that are too hot, too cold, or too noisy are ideal. In our house, the TV is next to the piano, and piano practice effectively eliminates TV watching.

Television: The Good

Television is not all bad. High-quality programs, such as historical miniseries and science programs, do exist, and these deserve to be watched and discussed by the entire family.

Television also can encourage reading. Viewing a televised adaptation of a novel may spark your child's interest enough to read the book or other similar books. If you read the book too, you can discuss similarities and differences between the two versions.

Finding a Quiet, Comfortable Place

Some junior high students cannot tune out noise and distractions while they read. Some are bothered by TV or radio dialogue but not by music. In this age of boomboxes and powerful amplifiers, those who do need quiet fre-

Finding a pleasant place for reading is important.

quently have a hard time finding it. We can help by making a quiet, comfortable, pleasant place for reading.

The Family That Reads Together

Parents often are told that they encourage reading when they themselves read. When we read, we are showing our children that reading is an enjoyable, lifelong activity. We also are making it much easier to find and justify quiet time for reading.

You may want to establish a daily time during which everyone reads for pleasure. This routine, often called Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), is followed in many schools. Entire classes, including the teacher, read books, magazines, or newspapers of their own choosing. Sometimes everyone in the school participates, including the principal, the secretary, and the custodian. If you want to follow this SSR approach at home, consider these guidelines:

- *Find a time* during which everyone can read. Activities that immediately follow reading should be no more interesting or exciting than reading itself. It's better to read before homework, yardwork, or dishes than before a VCR movie or a game outside. (This sounds a bit like reading to procrastinate. Whatever works!)
- *Have a wide variety of reading materials* available for everyone to choose from.
- *Eliminate interruptions* as much as possible. For example, disconnect the phone.
- *Read for a fixed length of time* that is comfortable for everyone. You might begin with periods as short as 20 minutes and increase them to 60 minutes or more as everyone becomes more preoccupied with their books. Setting an alarm will discourage clock watching.
- *Read together regularly* at least four times a week.

Gathering a Variety of Interesting Materials

Next to lack of time, the major reason junior high students give for not reading more is a lack of interesting reading material.

> *I couldn't find books I liked to read.*
>
> *I have read a lot of books, and now I find that a lot of books bore me.*
>
> *I don't like the subjects most books are about.*
>
> *[There are] not very many good books around my house.*

These reasons for not reading involve three key issues: variety, interest, and quantity.

Variety

Many junior high students feel that true reading involves books only. Parents and teachers frequently agree, often adding that the book must be a classic. We need to go beyond this narrow notion of reading because it omits a wide variety of other reading materials—comics, magazines, joke books, newspapers, how-to manuals, pamphlets, booklets, and text-based computer games. These types of materials are important sources of reading pleasure for many adults and can be just as appealing to junior high students. They are easily consumed during those many occasions when there is only a short time to read, for example, while sitting in the doctor's office or waiting for the bus. Also, for less enthusiastic readers, these materials can be a transition to book reading:

> *I don't like to read, although I read magazines and comic books. I read because of school. But I like comics. They're better than long books.*
>
> *The reason I don't read more is because I don't like to read. I get bored real fast. So when I read, it's either* **Mad** *or a short magazine.*

The books I read are ***Garfield*** *and* ***The Far Side****. Usually I [read]* ***Transworld Skateboarding*** *magazine.*

If you can afford it, subscribe to a variety of magazines; for example, *Boy's Life*, *Zillions*, and various teen magazines. More adult magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, and *Reader's Digest* will be of interest to junior high students. Less enthusiastic readers should be allowed and even encouraged to read comic books. For some, reading comics and reading magazines are the first stages of reading for fun, and for others who already enjoy books, they remain important, additional sources of reading pleasure.

Interest

Obviously, reading materials are much more likely to be picked up and read if they are interesting.

If it was a good book I would not be able to put the book down. I would read all the time. I would get into the book and cry, laugh, and get mad at the characters.

Often, we expect our children to find something to read on their own. When we do intervene, frequently it is because we are most concerned about the quality of the reading material. If this applies to you, I suggest that you take a more active role in helping your child find interesting material to read. This is especially critical for those children who do not read much and who need a lot of encouragement.

- *Provide variety.* The wider the variety of available books and materials, the greater the chance that children will find something of interest.
- *Find books and stories written for young adults.* Junior high students are particularly interested in books and stories written for adolescents and young adults. You can recognize this kind of material (sometimes called adolescent literature) by the following characteristics:
  - Characters are well-developed and are a year or two older than your child.

Reading extends beyond classic literature: comics, magazines, and newspapers are important sources of reading pleasure.

- Relationships are realistic (the characters must "live" adolescence).
- The story is told from the point of view of an adolescent.
- The author does not preach or talk down to the readers.
- The writing follows a simple but literary style.
- Chapters are short and easy to read.

Some examples of adolescent literature that students usually enjoy reading are *Winning Kicker* by Thomas J. Dygard, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Peck, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. Some of the reference books at the end of this booklet list more suggestions along with story summaries and recommended age or grade ranges.

► *Help find magazines and books that reflect particular interests.* This involves two steps. First, you must find out what your children's interests are and make a list. Then, visit libraries and bookstores together to locate materials that reflect these interests. Summaries on book jackets or in a list of recommended books can help decide what is appropriate.

I read as much as I did because I read many biographies of famous baseball players.

I read a lot about baseball and I read a lot when I get interested.

I read so much because I love Zane Grey's and Louis L'Amour's westerns. They are exciting and fun and usually contain many shootouts just like in real life.

► *Help children get started.* Becoming interested in a book frequently takes several chapters. In the words of one seventh grader:

I have to be pushed through the first part of the book.... Once I get to the good part, I like it.

If getting to the "good part" is particularly difficult with certain books, try reading the first part out loud to your children.

- *Help your youngster decide when to quit and go on to another book.* Not all books are going to be right for your junior high child. That's okay; just go on looking for other books. As bluntly stated by one eighth grader: "Often I get started on a book where it seems to take forever to get anywhere. I just stop reading it. Life's too short to waste on boring, monotonous books."

- *Some books may be too difficult.* Junior high students typically will not be interested in books that are difficult to read. Unfamiliar words, complex sentences, and abstract topics can turn reading into a meaningless, unpleasant task. When children lose interest for these reasons, we need to help them find a more suitable selection. If the difficult book is a good one, we might read it aloud.

  One way to measure whether reading is too difficult is to listen to our children read a page or two. If 10 or more words out of every 100 are read incorrectly, the reading is too frustrating. However, some kids are so interested in a topic or book that they will labor through it on their own even when it is difficult.

- *What about the classics?* Many classic books (e.g., *Treasure Island*, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *King Arthur*) are difficult to read. In addition, they do not have many of the characteristics of adolescent literature described earlier. Nevertheless, these books are not to be ignored. For starters, we can read some of the classics aloud.

  Indeed, regularly reading difficult but interesting books to our children (whether classics or not) is an important routine that should be started before our children learn to talk and continued at least through junior high.

- *Get suggestions.* Use a variety of sources to get ideas about interesting books and materials. These include

recommendations by other parents, other junior high students (especially your children's friends), literacy associations, librarians, school teachers, published book lists and reviews for parents or librarians, book clubs, and bookstores. Some sources are listed at the end of this booklet.

Quantity

Lots of books—that's the ticket. The less excited children are about reading, the more parents need to be responsible for supplying a steady stream of interesting books and magazines. This task is best accomplished through a combination of buying, borrowing, and exchanging.

► *Buying.* Most youngsters love to own books of their own. Trips to the library serve many purposes, but nothing takes the place of owning your own copies of best-loved books. Go with your children to the local bookstore. Offer to supply a book allowance. First-hand book shops are exciting, because you get to see all the latest, hottest literature. Secondhand book shops are just as much fun, but for different reasons—you can come away with many of the world's best books for a fraction of the price.

Buying your own books makes sense for other reasons: (1) it's a clear sign that parents value reading, (2) most students prefer reading new books that belong to them, (3) other children in your family can read them later on, (4) some books are special and deserve to be reread over the years, and (5) you have books to lend when you borrow from other families.

Besides bookstores, I strongly recommend garage sales and book clubs. Some teachers and schools sponsor book clubs that offer new books at discount prices.

► *Borrowing.* Because books can be quite expensive, borrowing from public and school libraries makes a lot of sense. Libraries also make choosing books easier because "juvenile" librarians are happy to recommend suitable books. You will discover that most librarians

Libraries offer lots of books to choose from, as well as help in making selections.

are delighted to meet new customers, and they will gladly help you learn how to use the library and to find the books and magazines that are right for you.

- *Exchanging.* Formally organizing a paperback exchange at community centers, schools, or friendly businesses is an inexpensive way to circulate books and magazines that are worth reading but not keeping. Some libraries already offer this service. You might also consider forming a neighborhood network in which families share books and magazines with one another. In neighborhood exchanges, families could agree to subscribe to different magazines to maxir ize the variety of reading material.

Encouraging Reading for Pleasure: It's Worth the Effort

I hope that the parent and student experiences, the guidelines, and the suggestions listed here have given you useful information on the "why's" and "how to's" of reading for pleasure. This kind of reading is important for junior high students, as well as for the rest of us. Each child has different needs, and it is up to us to learn how to satisfy these needs and start our children on a fulfilling journey through the many worlds offered by books and magazines.

What about the peace and joy mentioned at the beginning of this booklet? Peace and joy in reading come in double scoops. Our children derive their own peace and enjoyment as they read for pleasure, and their reading and pleasure will give us satisfaction and joy.

"Good reading" to us all.

Sources for Parents' Reading

Anderson, R.C. et al. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Center for the Study of Reading.

Binkley, M. (1988). *Becoming a nation of readers: What parents can do.* Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath in cooperation with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. (Single copies available for 50 cents from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.)

Christensen, J. (1983). *Your reading: A booklist for junior high and middle school students.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kimmel, M.M., & Segal, E. (1984). *For reading out loud! A guide to sharing books with children.* New York: Dell.

Matthews, D. (1988). *High interest, easy reading for junior and senior high school students.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Reed, A.J.S. (1988). *Comics to classics: A parent's guide to books for teens and preteens.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Trelease, J. (1989). *The new read-aloud handbook.* New York: Penguin.

Resources from IRA for Parents

Parent Booklets

Beginning Literacy and Your Child. Steven B. Silvern and Linda R. Silvern. No. 164.

Creating Readers and Writers. Susan Mandel Glazer. No. 165.

Encouraging Your Junior High Student to Read. John Shefelbine. No. 168.

Helping Your Child Become a Reader. Nancy L. Roser. No. 161.

How Can I Prepare My Young Child for Reading? Paula C. Grinnell. No. 163.

You Can Encourage Your High School Student to Read. Jamie Myers. No. 162.

You Can Help Your Young Child with Writing. Marcia Baghban. No. 160.

Your Child's Vision Is Important. Caroline Beverstock. No. 167.

Single copies of these parent booklets are available at a cost of US$1.75 each, prepaid only. Send your check to Parent Booklets at the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA. Please specify both title and publication number when ordering.

Parent Brochures

IRA has available 10 brochures covering a variety of topics pertaining to ways in which parents can help children of all ages become readers. To receive single copies of all 10 brochures, send a self-addressed envelope stamped with first class postage for *three* ounces to Parent Brochures at the address listed earlier. The brochures are available in bulk quantities also, and ordering information appears in each brochure. (Requests from outside the USA should include a self-addressed envelope, but postage is not required.)

Children's Choices

Children's Choices is a yearly list of books that children identify as their favorites. To receive a single copy, send a self-addressed envelope stamped with first class postage for *four* ounces to Children's Choices at the address listed earlier.

Young Adults' Choices

Young Adults' Choices is a yearly list of books that young adults identify as their favorites. To receive a single copy, send a self-addressed envelope stamped with first class postage for *two* ounces to Young Adults' Choices at the address listed earlier.

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About This Series

This booklet is part of a series designed to provide practical ideas parents can use to help their children become readers. Many of the booklets are copublished by IRA and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

ERIC/RCS Information Services

For more information on the development of reading and other language skills, write or call: ERIC/RCS, Smith Research Center, Suite 150, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408, USA. Telephone: 812-855-5847.

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